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ABSTRACT

The set of materials was designed for use in a workshop to train teachers and program developers in the participatory approach to designing and implementing vocational and workplace English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instructional programs. It first presents the principles of the participatory approach, based on the model of Paulo Freire, and presents a series of discussion questions and classroom tasks. It then outlines five stages in workplace ESL curriculum development: conducting negotiations; needs analysis; syllabus design; materials development; and student and curriculum assessment and evaluation. Examples of job-related performance objectives for ESL and materials from existing programs are included. Brief essays on selling workplace ESL instructional programs and techniques for authentic assessment are appended. Contains 10 references. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 427 562

The Participatory Approach to Workplace and Vocational ESL

Presented by:

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University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
27 March 1998

This workshop is presented under funding from the Center for Applied Linguistics' Project in Adult Immigrant Education (PAIE). For more information on CAL's PAIE products and projects, consult their web page at http://www.cal.org. Many materials are based on work completed by Jewelie Johnson, whose contributions are greatly appreciated.

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Objectives:

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- critically discuss elements of the participatory approach for workplace or vocational ESL curriculum development

- plan a components of a participatory lesson for a workplace/vocational ESL context

- identify and critique the stages of workplace ESL program development with regard to the participatory approach

Fundamentals of the Participatory Approach to Teaching Adult ESL:

Opener: *Are you familiar with the participatory approach? If you are, explain what you know. If you are not, what do you think the name of the approach suggests?*

The participatory approach to ESL curriculum design has, at its core, the imprint of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire believed that the achievement of literacy and the empowerment that resulted from education were not merely personal goals, but social objectives that can only be attained when people work together. He contrasted this to traditional *banking* model of education in which teachers, the holders of knowledge, simply deposit information in students' minds. Freire saw the roles of teacher and student as reciprocal ones in which information is exchanged. Elsa Auerbach, a leading figure in ESL participatory curriculum development in adult ESL programs, describes participatory curricula as *emergent*, cooperative efforts at learning through themes which learners identify as being relevant to their lives. Critical reflection leads to plans for transformative action. When students have a voice in what they learn, that control and confidence extend to their personal lives.

In the Frierian model as adapted for ESL by Auerbach (*ESL for Action Teacher's*, 1-7), a participatory lesson consists of the following elements of problem posing:

1. **Engage in ongoing needs assessment:** identifying issues of concern to the students (and others who learners communicate with).

2. **Present a *code*, or concrete representation of the concern or problem.** This may be in the form of a story, dialogue, or picture. Whatever is chosen, the representation should be a vehicle for reflection and action. For example, if students have indicated that they have a hard time understanding announcements broadcast over a P.A. system, and management has also stated that there is too much lag time between making a safety announcement and evacuation, teachers can bring in a recording of an actual announcement, a strip story of somebody who indicates confusion about an announcement, or a dialogue between an employee and a supervisor, discussing a problem resulting from misunderstanding of an announcement. It is crucial that the code be open-ended, enabling the students to discuss the concern and reflect upon it, ultimately helping the group to decide upon action for change. If the teacher offers **the one solution**, then the maturity of the adult learner is overlooked and the students have less intrinsic motivation to instigate change.

3. **Involve the students in analysis of the problem, making discussion as accessible as possible.** For example, you may create a **problem tree** in which the students first label the tree trunk with the problem and then discuss the roots of the problem and fill in its effects the branches. The language that is generated as well as the discussion of the problem enables the teacher to design future lessons which help the learners to use language to solve their problems as adults.

4. **Help students both plan and take action to conquer the problem.** During class, the teacher helps students develop the language skills necessary to take action. For example, if students have a hard time understanding urgent announcements over a PA system, the class may practice listening strategies which help them. This may include listening for key words or for asking another co-worker for assistance in understanding the message. It could also involve the teacher and the students asking management to make a modification which enhances communication, such as beginning a safety announcement with the repetition of the words "urgent" or "safety announcement."

5. **Treat learners and teachers as partners in evaluation of learner achievement.** Involve learners in self-evaluation exercises in which they examine how they have learned and how focusing on their actions tells them that they are improving. For example, learners may keep a written or taped dialogue journal with the teacher, may post information about their progress in a classroom, or in vocational contexts, may receive commendation from supervisors which they share in class. No matter how the ESL program requires progress to be reported, it is important for learners to be involved in being accountable for their own progress in a meaningful way.

Involving the learners as agents of change in their personal growth through education impacts the curricular process. In following a predetermined curriculum, the teacher tries to find the most effective ways to convey the information to the students: a one way process. In contrast, participatory curriculum development is interactive and ongoing. A key factor in the participatory approach is flexibility, in that the teacher must be willing to be open to student involvement, dialogue, and possible criticism, and ready to make adjustments in the class curriculum. In many cases, the curricular approach may not be purely liberatory--teachers who are from outside of the community often teach immigrants, especially in formal programs. Nevertheless, participatory approaches can be and have been incorporated into ESL programming. The high degree of non-hierarchical personal involvement demanded by the participatory approach requires that all participants (teachers and students) take risks.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are key components of the participatory approach?

2. What elements of this approach appeal to you? What questions do you have?

3. How do you think this approach could work within a competency-based framework?

4. What challenges do you think this approach presents to teachers and students?

Task: Exploring Key Components of the Participatory Approach:

1. Brainstorm problems that your students have experienced in a workplace context.

2. Develop a code that you could present to a class. Be prepared to share the code with the whole group. In explaining the use of the code, address the following questions:

   - What is the context of the problem?

   - Who are the people involved in the problem?

STOP. LET'S PRESENT.

3. What are some ways that you could have students discuss the sources and effects of the problem? Are there activities that you currently use for reading, discussion, questions and answers, or language experience story creation that you could use?

4. What ideas could you suggest or encourage for your students to take action? What steps could you take to practice taking action in class? What language skills would taking action involve? What information might you need to find out in order to assist students in taking effective action?

5. How would you evaluate learner progress? How could learners also evaluate their progress?

STOP. LET'S PRESENT.

Stages in Curricular Development for Workplace ESL

At first thought, the notion of participatory ESL in a business-sponsored class (or in a competency-based vocational ESL curriculum) may seem impossible. If management is paying for workers to learn English (or a government entity is a sponsor with specific reporting requirements), how can needs of the learners, as specified by the learners, be addressed? What if the expressed concerns are different? Although there are no easy answers, it has been our experience that employers who are given information concerning how workplace ESL is most effective and how participatory ESL works, will give it a try. Businesses which have embraced total quality management are open to extending this philosophy to employee training, including ESL classes. It is possible, too, for teachers who work within a competency-based framework to adopt the principles of participatory education. For example, learners can choose and prioritize units within a curriculum. Self-evaluation can be made a component of on-going assessment. Programs which involve learners in ongoing curricular development can see an increase in retention rates and in enrollment because the program is responsive to their needs.

Recall that the participatory approach teacher is a partner to students. In addition to this, the workplace ESL instructor must be able to take a leading role as a course developer, someone who can manage the concerns of all stakeholders in the educational. As a course developer, the teacher must work with the concerns of management and with learners, marrying the concerns together.

In *Teaching English in the Workplace*, Mary Ellen Belfiore and Barbara Burnaby outline the following stages to workplace ESL curriculum development:

- conducting negotiations
- needs analysis
- syllabus design
- materials development
- assessment and evaluation

Conducting Negotiations. Here, the nuts and bolts of offering the course are established. How long will the course be? Where will it take place? Who supplies the materials? How will employees be chosen for participation? How will they be compensated? It is important that there be a clear method for communication established and that there be commitment from both staff and line management to the project. The employees' immediate supervisors must be part of the communication network, enabling their supervisees to attend class and reinforcing language that they want to practice.

Needs Analysis. The ESL instructor needs to know the nature of interaction and communication at the work site. This is accomplished through:

- conducting interviews with stakeholders (management, co-workers, students);
- taking a tour of facilities;
- observing workplace communication, collecting written materials and signage, and learning the workplace lingo;
- conducting in-take testing to assess language proficiency of students.

The information collected before the course starts is used in syllabus framework planning. Once the course begins, more tailored needs assessment with learners can be conducted. The teachers enlists the help of the learners in determining what their priorities are. Let's practice a needs assessment technique that can be used to plan the syllabus.

Task: Communication Map

1. Select a partner to interview.
2. Put your partner's name and job title in the middle of the paper.
3. Make a diagram which captures:
   a. who your partner communicates with at work
   b. the nature of the communication

What does this diagram show you about workplace communication for your partner? Based on this outline information, what information would you want to collect to help you design a workplace syllabus? What could a similar diagram tell you about a worker in an ESL class?

STOP. LET'S PRESENT.

Syllabus Design. Based on data from the needs analysis and the learners, a basic syllabus can be formulated, which reflects the concerns of all stakeholders in improved communication.

Discussion: Examine the *Job-Related Performance Objectives* on the following pages. Do they seem to reflect the communication goals of one group exclusively (e.g., management only) or do they seem to reflect communication concerns for all?

The wording of performance objectives suggests that this is a competency-based curriculum. How could the teacher use information from needs analysis to develop a participatory approach code to help employees in class work on solving communication related problems?

JOB-RELATED PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Performance	Performance Objective	Cultural Objective	Resources/Activities
Social Exchanges	• Exchange greetings for the workplace • Ask about someone's family, job • Leave-taking • Thank someone	• Understand how Americans may interpret lack of social interactions • Awareness of conversational body language differences • Awareness of intonation differences • Awareness of hand gesture meanings and differences	• *Speaking Up At Work* • *Collaborations* • Role play
Asking for Clarification	• Ask for repetition • Confirm that you understand/do not understand • Ask to have a word spelled • Ask someone to speak more slowly • Ask to have work checked • Ask someone to show/train/teach you how to do something	• Understand respect is not lost by admitting something is not understood • Understand personal responsibility to indicate when communication is not understood	• *Speaking Up At Work* • Video: *El Norte*
Schedules,Processes; Recognizing and Understanding the Order Things	• Understand and explain time clock procedures • Explain a job process • Follow written and verbal instructions • Read and understand Assignment Board		• *ESL Operations: Techniques for Learning While Doing* • Company realia

JOB-RELATED PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Performance	Performance Objective	Cultural Objective	Resources/Activities
Discussing Problems	• Find out who to talk to about a problem • Clearly state a problem/request • Arrange a time to speak to appropriate personnel • Ask to speak to someone • Thank someone for his/her time	• Understand importance of speaking with specifics • Understand importance of recognizing different points of view	• *Speaking Up At Work* • Role play
Work Absences	• Understand company attendance policy • Explain absences • Answer questions about returning to work • Call-in absence to company recording • Ask for time-off	• Understand importance of work attendance from	• *Speaking Up At Work* • Role play • Company realia
Work Safety	• Read and understand job warning signage • Describe and state purpose of safety equipment • Understand safety rules • Remind coworkers to use safety equipment • Warn people of dangerous situations • Describe an accident • Report an accident • Complete an accident report	• Understand that showing concern for coworker's job safety is not an insult to that coworker	• *Speaking Up At Work* • *Lifeprints* • *Picture Stories* • Role play • Company realia

Materials Development. Although there are similarities which cut across almost every workplace, each business has its own unique culture. Consequently, workplace ESL teachers will find that they must create their own materials which reflect the literacy and other communication needs of the workplace community. Examine the *Job-Related Performance Objectives* pages again. Notice that the instructor for this class has noted that some resources consist of **company realia**. Realia simply means authentic materials that the employees encounter or use on the job. For example, there may be terminology for defective products. To teach the terminology, the teacher must gather real examples of defective goods. Sometimes, students can bring in the realia. Other times, the company contact may provide it.

Discussion: Imagine that you are teaching the workplace ESL class for which the *Job-Related Performance Objectives* have been established. What types of would you like to gather to design materials for a class?

Discussion: Under the category *Work Absences*, the instructor lists the performance objective, *call in absence to company recording*. How could you use company realia in a listening/speaking lesson to meet this objective? How would you evaluate the students?

Assessment and Evaluation. In the participatory approach to ESL, curriculum development is a process, ongoing and reflective of learner-defined needs. It stands to reason, then, that evaluation involve the learner throughout the course. Certainly, learners should also know how progress about them is being reported to the sponsor of the course.

ESL learners are concerned about their progress in learning English and in being able to interact successfully in English on and off the job. Improved understanding of learners occurs over time and influences how teachers prepare for class. Therefore, giving time in the class for reflection and discussion of their achievements is important and will provide teacher and learner alike with information useful to improving the course. Giving learners an opportunity to discuss course content and teaching techniques enables the instructor to better prepare for meaningful classes.

Discussion: Examine the following checklist for learning from the first week of a workplace ESL class. What are the advantages of such a checklist? What could be improved? If you have non-readers, what could you do to help learners monitor their progress?

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Checklist for Learning: Week 1

1. Vocabulary: Check (✔) the words you know. Add more words if you wish.

___ wife	___ T.G.I.F.
___ husband	___ alphabet
___ son	___ _____
___ daughter	___ _____
___ kids	___ _____
___ children	___ _____
___ family	___ _____

II. Language: Check (✔) what you can do in English. Add more ideas if you wish.

I can

___ ask someone to repeat something
___ ask someone about their job or family
___ ask someone to spell a word I don't know or understand
___ tell someone I understand something
___ tell someone to speak more slowly
___ tell someone I have an appointment or an interview
___ say the letters of the alphabet
___ say *could* or *can* when asking a question
___ ask someone to show me something
___ ask someone to train me to do something
___ ask someone to teach how to do something
___ _____
___ _____
___ _____
___ _____

Evaluation of progress should be a learning experience that will assist learners in social interactions or literacy events experienced outside of the classroom. For example, role plays in which students apply practiced language in situations reflective of the workplace are important. Bell and Burnaby recommend that supervisors be involved by identifying critical incidents where problems in communication arise. Supervisors then keep track of improvement in communication throughout the duration of the course (*Teaching English in the Workplace*, 124-126). This also gives supervisors a role in recognizing daily opportunities for helping ESL learners practice their developing communication skills on the job.

Discussion: Based on your own experiences, observations, or what you know of your students, what are some possible critical incidents that a supervisor could track over time?

Final evaluation should reflect the input of the learners, teachers, and other stakeholders in the class. They may consist of narratives, progress reports, surveys, and other methods of post-testing. Information should be carefully analyzed and used in making a final report, including any recommendations for further educational endeavors. The report-writing process also helps the instructor reflect on what worked well and what changes would be helpful in future courses.

Discussion: Examine the *Curriculum Report* forms which follow. Who is the audience for the report? What is the use of such a report? What other type of information could be included? Why?

FIRST FIVE WEEK CURRICULUM REPORT

ALBERT TROSTEL PACKINGS, LTD.

September 27, 1996

Social Exchanges:

___ 1. Exchange greetings for the workplace
___ 2. Ask about someone's family, job
___ 3. Leave-taking
___ 4. Thank someone
___ 5.

Health:

___ 1. Call in sick/speak to answering machine
___ 2. Name parts of the body
___ 3. Describe symptoms
___ 4. Give medical history information
___ 5. Understand common medical terminology
___ 6. Describe an injury
___ 7.

Job-related Specifics:

___ 1. Understand and explain time clock procedures
___ 2. Understand and explain defective parts
___ 3. Vocabulary
___ 4.

Grammar:

___ 1. Understand and use contractions
___ 2. Understand verb *TO BE*
___ 3. Understand, contrast, and use present and present continuous verbs
___ 4. Understand, contrast, and use past and past continuous verbs
___ 5. Understand and use adverbs of frequency
___ 6. Understand and use modals *can, could, would, should*
___ 7.

Oral Skills:

___ 1. Ask for repetition
___ 2. Say that you understand
___ 3. Clarify when not understood
___ 4. Ask to have instructions repeated
___ 6. Ask to have work checked
___ 7. Ask someone to *show/train/teach* you how to do something
___ 8. Explain problems
___ 9. Find out who to talk to about a problem
___ 10. Arrange to talk to someone
___ 11. State a problem
___ 12. Explain absences
___ 13. Answer questions about returning to work
___ 14.

Social/Cultural Awareness:

___ 1. Awareness of conversational body language differences
___ 2. Awareness of intonation differences
___ 3. Awareness of hand gesture meanings and differences
___ 4.

Other Language Skills:

___ 1. Say the alphabet
___ 2. Distinguish vowels from consonants
___ 3. Recognize word syllables
___ 4. Know cardinal numbers
___ 5. Understand and use ordinal numbers
___ 6. Distinguish between voiced and unvoiced sounds
___ 7.

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LAST FIVE WEEK CURRICULUM REPORT

ALBERT TROSTEL PACKINGS, LTD.

October 31, 1996

Job-related Specifics:

—— 1. Define and describe defects
—— 2. Read and understand job warning signage
—— 3. Describe and state purpose of safety equipment
—— 4. To complete an accident report
—— 5. To understand safety rules
—— 6. To read and understand the assignment board
—— 7. To understand and complete labor cards
—— 8. To understand company attendance policy

Grammar:

—— 1. Understand and use prepositions of location
—— 2. Understand, contrast, and use past and past continuous verbs
—— 3. Understand and use comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs
—— 4.
—— 5.
—— 6.
—— 7.

Oral Skills:

—— 1. Remind coworkers to use safety equipment
—— 2. To warn people of dangerous situations
—— 3. To describe an accident
—— 4. To report an accident
—— 6. To describe job responsibilities
—— 7. To ask for and give directions
—— 8. To ask for explanations of progressive discipline
—— 9. To page using the company intercom
—— 10. To express feelings
—— 11.
—— 12.
—— 13.
—— 14.

Social/Cultural Awareness:

—— 1. To understand company hierarchal structure
—— 2.
—— 3.
—— 4.

English for Work
PROGRAM EVALUATION
for Managers and Supervisors

Please check the appropriate box.

	YES	NO	NOT SURE	NOT APPLICABLE
Is there an improvement in general conversation (work-related and social?)				
Has there been a change in morale and self-confidence among employees?				
Is there a better understanding of safety rules, policies, forms, and other workplace documents?				
Has improvement of employees' skills affected their chance for promotion?				
Have there been fewer job-related misunderstandings?				
Has this program benefited the company?				
Should the language classes be continued?				
Would other employees of your department benefit from language classes? How many?				

Please check the topic area in which employees could use some extra work:

- Workplace vocabulary ☐
- Following instructions ☐
- Making simple requests ☐
- Reading signs around the workplace ☐
- Understanding policies and procedures ☐
- Having basic conversations ☐
- Other ☐

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please comment on the following:

1. Were you satisfied with your participation in the development of this language program? Why or why not?

2. This language program was oral-skill specific (listening and speaking). Do you think the course should have been more inclusive of reading and writing skills as well?

3. Were you inconvenienced by the language classes/instructor in any way? If so, how?

4. How would you improve this language program?

5. Would you recommend this language program/instructor to other industries? Why or why not?

6. Do you have any other comments regarding this language program?

References & Resources:

Auerbach, Elsa Roberts and Nina Wallerstein. *ESL for Action*. Student Book and Teacher's Guide. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987. These books offer guidance in implementing the participatory approach for adult ESL workplace classes.

Auerbach, Elsa Roberts. *Making Meaning, Making Change*. McHenry, IL: CAL/Delta, 1992. This book offers guidance on implementing the participatory approach in a family literacy/native language literacy program.

Belfiore, Mary Ellen and Barbara Burnaby. *Teaching English in the Workplace, 2nd. ed.* Toronto: Pippin Publishing, . 1995. Many of the ideas for this workshop spring from this book. It is a highly useful, informative text. It can be purchased through the catalogue from *New Readers' Press*.

Burt, Miriam. *Workplace ESL Instruction: Interviews from the Field*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1997. This PAIE document consists of interviews and advice from workplace ESL service providers.

Burt, Miriam. "Selling Workplace ESL Instructional Programs," *ERIC Digest* EDO-LE-96-01, 12/95. This ERIC Digest gives good advice for educational service providers interested in offering workplace ESL programs.

Center for Applied Linguistics: *Sharing What Works: Workplace ESL* (video and discussion guide). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1994. This video and viewing guide offers educational service providers and businesses a vehicle for the discussion of program design and implementation.

Gillespie, Marilyn. *Learning to Work in a New Land: A Review and Sourcebook for Vocational and Workplace ESL*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1996. This PAIE document offers current information on foreign-born workers in the U.S., approaches to vocational and workplace training, and a historical overview of immigrants in the workforce.

Johnson, Jewelie. MS. *English International Workplace Guide*. Southeast Wisconsin Communication Project Document, n.d. Ms. Johnson's evaluation tools have been used in this workshop. Look for a version of her curriculum work on the soon-to-be finished webpage devoted to the Southeast Wisconsin Communication Project. An announcement and link will appear on the Adult ESL Hypernews Discussion Group.

Kerka, Sandra. "Techniques for Authentic Assessment," *Practice Application Brief* ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. This document examines alternative assessment in adult education.

Nash, Andrea, et al. *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL*. McHenry, IL: CAL/Delta, 1992. This is the companion volume to *Making Meaning,Making Change*. It consists of teacher-to-teacher advice for working in a participatory family literacy project.

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Introducing the Hypernews Adult ESL Discussion Group at UW-Whitewater

UW-Whitewater maintains a web page for academic and professional discussion. To participate in the Adult ESL Discussion Group, simply follow the directions given below. Participants do not need to have an e-mail address. They simply need access to the World Wide Web. People interested in participating need to be made official members of the discussion group. Please let me know if you or your colleagues would like to be added by contacting me, Susan Huss-Lederman at 414-472-5038, by e-mailing me at hussleds@uwwvax.uww.edu or by posting a message to the discussion group.

To access the group:

1. Open the following location: http://hypernews.uww.edu

2. Click on **Adult ESL Discussion Group**.

3. Until you have an official user-id and password, log on using *guest* for both fields.

4. Look for messages from Susan Huss-Lederman with the words *user information* in the header. This is where you will find your user-id and password.

5. How to add messages is self-evident. Follow the on-screen directions.

ERIC Digest
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

December 1995
EDO-LE-96-01

Selling Workplace ESL Instructional Programs

by Miriam Burt
Center for Applied Linguistics

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a rise in visibility for workplace instructional programs to improve workers' basic skills and English language proficiency. From 1988 through 1994, the U.S. Department of Education's National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP) funded more than 300 basic skills programs, 49% of which offered some English as a second language (ESL) instruction (Burt & Saccomano, 1995). However, independent of (uncertain) federal and other public funding, few companies actually provide instruction in basic skills and ESL to their workers. In fact, a survey done by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 1994) revealed that of the 12,000 businesses surveyed, only 3% offered training in basic skills or in ESL.

This digest explores the issue of why companies do and do not provide workplace basic skills and ESL instruction. It reports on data from a survey of businesses in Illinois (Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center, 1993) and from interviews with 18 workplace ESL program directors, teacher trainers, curriculum writers, and instructors (Burt, in press), and it offers suggestions to educational providers and independent consultants on how to *sell* or market workplace ESL programs to employers.

Why Some Businesses Provide Instruction

Managers, education providers, employees, and supervisors from twenty-one businesses in Illinois were interviewed in a study of why businesses do or do not provide basic skills and ESL instruction (Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center, 1993). Fourteen businesses provided this instruction, seven did not. The following were the reasons given for initiating workplace programs:

Quality improvement

In manufacturing companies there has been a recent emphasis on quality, which has necessitated a change in the manufacturing process. When companies provided quality improvement trainings, they were not successful. Managers realized that before these could be implemented, basic skills needed to be raised.

Commitment of top management to training and education

In some companies, training and education are part of management philosophy. The classes offered in these companies often cover general knowledge and skills. The goal is not necessarily to prepare workers to succeed in their company training, but rather to allow them to pursue their own goals.

Sales effort of an educational provider

Educational providers who were knowledgeable and willing to prepare and design basic skills programs at a low cost have sold such programs to managers who are aware of basic skills problems within the workplace. If the employers

and the educational provider have a "previously established relationship" (Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center, 1993, p 3), there is a greater chance the employers will buy the educator's services.
The businesses' preferred instruction providers were public schools, community colleges, and universities. In fact, these were preferred over in-house providers and commercial job-training providers. Their third, fourth, and final choices were community-based organizations, private consultants, and union consortia.

Why Other Businesses Do Not Provide Instruction
Although some of the Illinois business representatives interviewed indicated that they were aware of employee deficits in basic skills and language proficiency, they had not initiated workplace programs. The reasons given were:

Cost of Instruction
Some companies did not offer training of any kind to any of their employees‹whether as perks for executives, technological training for middle management, or basic skills instruction for entry level workers. Training of any kind was seen as too expensive.

Reluctance of upper management
Upper management was at times reluctant to initiate training. This was due, in part, to lack of information about the need for programs, the kinds of programs available, and the cost involved. A 1990 evaluation of state-financed workplace-based retraining programs supports this finding (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1990). This study attributed managers' failure to provide instruction to a lack of information about the best approach to use, uncertainty about how to fit the training into new technology and work processes, and reluctance to disrupt work schedules for an "elusive future benefit" (p.131).

The not-bad-enough syndrome
Some companies find other ways of dealing with basic skills deficits rather than providing instructional intervention. For example, some businesses screen prospective employees through a basic skills test. In a 1989 survey by the American Management Association, 90% of the responding companies said they would not hire workers who fail such a test (U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1990). Some companies organize the workplace so that the language and literacy deficiencies of already hired workers do not hinder production. These workers may be given the so-called back-of-the-house jobs such as dishwashers or salad preparers, where they have no contact with the public, and minimal, if any, contact with English-speaking coworkers and supervisors. In many companies where most of the workers speak a common native language (often Spanish), frontline managers speak the native language of the workers and the lack of English skills becomes almost irrelevant to the work flow (Burt, in press). However, although the native language may be used almost exclusively in some entry-level positions, in order for workers to be promoted, good English skills are still obligatory (McGroarty, 1990).

How Educational Providers Can Sell their Product
Workplace ESL educators from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Texas, and Virginia were asked how programs can best sell their services to businesses (Burt, in press). These practitioners were from educational institutions, community-based organizations, volunteer organizations, union consortia, or from within the business itself. Three were independent consultants who had started their own companies to provide workplace ESL instruction.
The following themes surfaced, many of which echo the conclusions drawn from the survey data listed above.

1. Start out with a better chance of success by contacting companies with a history of offering training for employees at all levels, not just as perks for executives.

Don't promise what cannot be delivered. It is not likely that a workplace ESL class of 40-60 hours will turn participants with low-level language skills into fluent speakers of English. Educate all the stakeholders‹the general managers, the frontline managers, the human resources department, and the prospective learners themselves‹about the length of time needed to achieve proficiency in a second language.

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3. Offer short courses, or "learning opportunities" (Jurmo, 1995, p. 12) with a few specific, attainable goals. Discrete, highly targeted courses such as accent reduction, teamwork skills, and pre- total quality management (TQM) are saleable and give learners skills to use in any job or workplace.

Seek ways to maximize resources and personnel already at the workplace. Programs can schedule a one-hour class/one-hour study time match at work sites where there are learning centers for individual, computer-assisted instruction. Instructors can team with job skills trainers to offer vocational English as a second language (VESL). The program can require home study to match workplace course hours. This is especially important when offering instruction to learners with low-level English skills who may not yet have the language proficiency necessary to access the more specialized courses listed above.

5. In addition to providing instruction on American workplace practices and values to ESL learners, offer cross-cultural courses to both native and nonnative English speakers at the workplace. This may help dissipate feelings that the language minority workers are getting special treatment and can directly address the need for better communication at the workplace.

6. Develop realistic ways of documenting how instruction has improved performance at the workplace. Promotions due to improved skills are very impressive; however, in many companies, downsizing is occurring, and no one, native or nonnative speaker, is being promoted. Instead, educators can cite other indicators of improvement, such as increased number of written and oral suggestions made by learners at meetings or other appropriate times; increased number of learners expressing the desire to be promoted; and increased number of learners asking to be cross-trained. (See Mikulecky & Lloyd, 1994; and Mrowicki & Conrath, 1994, for discussions of measuring and documenting improvements at the workplace.)

Make certain that general managers actively support the program. They authorize the classes and their authority is necessary to ensure that their frontline managers (the participants' direct supervisors) strongly support the classes. The supervisors will arrange schedules so that workers can attend classes, provide opportunities on the job for them to use what they are learning, and encourage them to attend classes regularly. (See Kirby, 1989, for a discussion of the role of frontline managers in ESL instructional programs.)

8. Don't insist on teaching language for the workplace only. Although the workplace is the core of and the backdrop for instruction, workplace instruction does not need to be connected exclusively to workplace skills. Educators know that learning means transfer of skills to other life situations and learners have always sought this link. Many educators interviewed said that company management asked them to teach life skills and general communication skills as well as workplace skills, especially to learners with minimal English.

Conclusion

Although basic skills and English language instruction are often viewed as real needs at the workplace, few companies provide this for their workers. With the decrease in federal and state funds available for instruction at the workplace, it is not enough for educational providers to design, implement, and evaluate workplace instructional programs. They must also be able to *sell* their programs to the businesses they are asking to sponsor the instruction.

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PRACTICE APPLICATION BRIEF

by Sandra Kerka

1995

TECHNIQUES FOR AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Learning is . . . a dynamic process in which learners actively construct knowledge . . . the acquisition and organization of information into a series of increasingly complex understandings . . . influenced by context (Holt 1992). Educators who view learning in this way realize that quantitative methods of evaluating learners do not "measure up." Authentic forms of assessment present a more qualitative and valid alternative. Authentic assessments (AAs) incorporate a wide variety of techniques "designed to correspond as closely as possible to `real world' student experiences" (Custer 1994, p. 66). They are compatible with adult, career, and vocational education. After all, apprenticeship is a time-honored form of authentic learning: skills taught in context. "High-performance workplaces" demand critical thinking, self-directed learning, and individual responsibility for career development (Borthwick 1995; Jones 1994)-which the process of AA can develop. This **Practice Application Brief** describes types of ıuthentic assessment, explains some of the advantages and challenges they present, and highlights some best ctices in design and implementation, with specific examples from adult, career, and vocational education.

What Are AAs?

Assessments are authentic when they have meaning in themselves-when the learning they measure has value beyond the classroom and is meaningful to the learner. AAs address the skills and abilities needed to perform actual tasks. The following are some tools used in authentic assessment (Custer 1994; Lazar and Bean 1991; Reif 1995; Rudner and Boston 1994): checklists (of learner goals, writing/reading progress, writing/reading fluency, learning contracts, etc.); simulations; essays and other writing samples; demonstrations or performances; intake and progress interviews; oral presentations; informal and formal observations by instructors, peers, and others; self-assessments; and constructed-response questions. Students might be asked to evaluate case studies, write definitions and defend them orally, perform role plays, or have oral readings recorded on tape. They might collect writing folders that include drafts and revisions showing changes in spelling and mechanics, revision strategies, and their history as a writer.

Perhaps the most widely used technique is portfolio assessment. Portfolios are a collection of learner work over time. They may include research papers, book reports, journals, logs, photographs, drawings, video and audiotapes, abstracts of readings, group projects, software, slides, test results; in fact, many of the assessment tools listed earlier could have a place in a portfolio. However, the hallmark of a portfolio used for assessment is that the contents are selected by the learner (Hayes et al. 1994). The items are chosen according to a set of standards or objectives connected to the curriculum or learning event. They should represent a documented history of learning and an organized demonstration of accomplishment. Portfolios can serve as a catalyst for reflection on one's growth as a rner and a means of identifying areas for improvement (ibid.). They can serve as a tool for presenting oneself to ₚotential employers (Borthwick 1995; MacIsaac and Jackson 1994).

What's Good about AAs?

Many of these methods are worlds away from traditional tests and grading. What advantages do authentic techniques provide? Well-designed AAs demonstrate a rich array of what learners know and can do, they display both the products and the processes of learning, making learners aware of the processes and encouraging ownership. Authentic assessments are adaptable, flexible, ongoing, and cumulative, depicting learner growth over time (Custer et al. 1994; Holt 1992). Because they should be closely aligned with the curriculum, they connect thinking and doing, theory and practice, in authentic contexts. Assessment should become an integral part of teaching and learning; other learning opportunities may arise during assessment. "The process of assessment is itself a constructivist learning experience, requiring students to apply thinking skills, to understand the nature of high quality performance, and to provide feedback to themselves and others" (Rudner and Boston 1994, p. 7). The feedback and results enable teachers and learners to consider the next steps for improving both teaching and learning.

Although they raise concerns about subjectivity, AAs allow multiple human judgments of learning. Teachers, peer reviewers, and community members may all be involved in various performance ratings, and-a critical element-learners evaluate and monitor themselves. Alternative assessments can accommodate varied learning styles and serve the purposes of instruction, not other reasons for evaluating students (comparing individuals, comparing programs, demonstrating accountability, etc.).

Authentic assessments do pose certain challenges. They require abandoning traditional notions about testing and evaluation and they change teacher and student roles. They are time consuming for teachers to prepare and implement, because they require clarity in goals, outcomes, criteria, and expectations and assurance that all stakeholders understand (Hayes et al. 1994). To ensure that evaluation standards are applied consistently, teachers and other raters need careful training (Borthwick 1995). Students need to be prepared for self-monitoring and reflection (Jones 1994). Some may be more comfortable with the traditional boundaries of grades and testing at set times.

As are potentially more equitable in accommodating learning styles and acknowledging multiple ways of demonstrating competence. However, not all schools and districts may have access to some of the resources needed to develop them, and they impose demands that may challenge some students (Rudner and Boston 1994). Authentic assessments do not necessarily have to replace other forms of evaluation but can be used to augment and broaden the picture of learner progress. Jones (1994) cautions, however, that it is a mistake to use authentic techniques such as portfolios while still teaching primarily through traditional methods such as lectures and assigned textbook readings.

Adult, Career, and Vocational Education Applications

Adult educators, especially adult literacy teachers, find authentic assessments especially appealing as an alternative to the problematic use of standardized tests with adults. Workplace literacy programs are particularly rooted in the context of the job site; Bousquet et al. (1994) describe a workplace assessment in which participants are given a scenario depicting a work-related situation-choosing among two job offers-and must make a choice, explain their strategy for choosing it, give supporting facts, and state why the alternative was not chosen. The scoring rubric has five major categories: understands scenario, demonstrates strategy, performs calculations, arrives at solution, writes response. Each category has subcriteria that are scored on three levels; e.g., under "understands scenario" are distinguishes relevant/irrelevant facts, identifies relationships among facts, draws inferences, mentions external factors.

A career education example is the Employability Skills Portfolio (Stemmer, Brown, and Smith 1992) used in Michigan schools. The portfolios contain evidence of students' attainment of academic skills, personal management behaviors such as meeting deadlines and working without supervision, and teamwork skills such as listening and compromise. Students update their portfolios throughout high school in consultation with parents and counselors, and local business representatives review them and provide feedback that helps students identify and improve weaknesses in their employment potential.

Vocational education has a long tradition of activity-based learning and product assessment (Custer 1994). In a business communication course (Fitch 1993), high school students define and create a business and are evaluated on innovation, creativity, following directions, writing, and format. Each student prepares a scenario describing the siness; a spreadsheet showing products and profit; a job description and resume for a prospective employee; a ıbase of positions and salaries; a letter of complaint and response letter (on student-designed letterheads with logos); and a biweekly company newsletter. Fitch shows how this ambitious project enables assessment of integrated skills, allows both high- and low-ability students to succeed, and draws upon the resources of the business community.

Some Advice for Implementation

It should be clear that authentic assessments must be carefully designed and evaluation criteria rigorously selected. Among the characteristics of good AAs are the following: (Custer 1994; Rudner and Boston 1994):

Engaging, meaningful, worthy problems or tasks that match the content and outcomes of instruction
Real-life applicability
Multistaged-demonstrations of knowing, knowing why, and knowing how
Emphasis on product and process, conveying that both development and achievement matter
Rich, multidimensional, varied formats, both on-demand (in-class essays) and cumulative (portfolios)
Opportunities for learner self-evaluation
Cognitive complexity-requiring higher order thinking skills
Clear, concise, and openly communicated standards
Fairness in scoring procedures and their application

To ensure that assessment and instruction are linked, they should be planned at the same time. The following ·stions can guide planning (Reif 1995; Rudner and Boston 1994): What should learners know and be able to do? ·· nat cognitive, affective, and metacognitive skills should they demonstrate? What types of problems or tasks involve those skills? What concepts or principles should be applied in performing those tasks? What are the reasons for the assessment? What use will be made of the results? By whom? What criteria should be used?

One type of performance evaluation criteria are rubrics. Rubrics are scoring devices or tools that specify performance expectations and the various levels to which learners should perform (Custer 1994). Rubrics provide a framework that helps raters to be consistent, focuses the attention of assessor and assessee on important outcomes, and establish benchmarks for documenting progress. Rubrics feature (1) a stated standard, objective, behavior, or quality; (2) a rating scale; and (3) specific performance characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which the standard has been met. Custer gives an example of a performance scenario or "design brief" used in technology education. The learner is asked to design an environmental control system for a room. The rubric lists eight criteria: number and quality of sources of information, number and quality of sources of supplies, ingenuity and creativity, use of design criteria, quality of documentation, workability of the system, quality of futures thinking, quality of the systems model, and remaining within budget. Each criterion is rated as exemplary, acceptable, or not yet acceptable.

Because alternative assessments take time to prepare, and because at best they should be learner centered and individualized, teachers should collaborate whenever possible in their development. Collaboration with employers and community members helps ensure the real-world authenticity of the tasks. Collaboration with students prepares them to be peer assessors and helps them develop responsibility for their learning. Before assessment, students can ıggest creative alternatives and possible criteria; during assessment, teacher-learner interaction can bring out deeper derstanding, and afterward, teachers and learners can reflect on the results to identify individual patterns of progress and new directions.

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Before this workshop, I can:

Objective:	with ease				with difficulty
identify elements of the participatory approach for workplace/vocational ESL curriculum development	5	4	3	2	1
design a participatory lesson for one stage the curricular process in a workplace/ vocational ESL context	5	4	3	2	1
critically examine the role of the participatory approach in ESL instruction	5	4	3	2	1

Questions I have are:

After this workshop, I can:

Objective:	with ease				with difficulty
identify elements of the participatory approach for workplace/vocational ESL curriculum development	5	4	3	2	1
design a participatory lesson for one stage the curricular process in a workplace/ vocational ESL context	5	4	3	2	1
critically examine the role of the participatory approach in ESL instruction	5	4	3	2	1

On the hypernews group, I would like to discuss more about the following topics raised in this session ...

Other comments: